

What is the community challenge?

Low parental education attainment, unemployment, poor parenting skills, and exposure to unhealthy behaviors and mental health issues are some of the main home environmental issues that worsen the negative short- and long-term effects of family poverty on children.

What is the promising solution?

The Great Families 2020 program seeks to address this community challenge and improve the financial stability among families by implementing a two-generational approach to service delivery that uses family case management to direct at-risk families to evidence-based interventions and wraparound services. Children enroll in early childhood education and parents participate in activities for economic assets, workforce development, and education. The five key components to the service delivery model are: (1) early childhood development, (2) postsecondary and employment pathways, (3) economic assets, (4) health and well-being, and (5) social capital.

Program At-a-Glance

CNCS Program: Social Innovation Fund

Intervention: Great Families 2020

Grantee: United Way of Central Indiana

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity

Focus Population: Vulnerable Parents with Children

Communities Served: Indianapolis, Indiana

What was the purpose of the evaluation?

The evaluation of United Way of Central Indiana's Great Families 2020 by Indiana University Public Policy Institute and the Polis Center began in 2017 and finished reporting in 2019. The evaluation sought to document program implementation, identify if the program was implemented with fidelity across sites, and determine if a more rigorous impact evaluation could be conducted by the end of 2020. To achieve these goals, the evaluation included an implementation study and feasibility study. The implementation study focused on identifying (1) to what extent the program was implemented with fidelity; (2) how implementation varied by site; and (3) the barriers to implementing the program successfully. The feasibility study aimed to assess the readiness of the Great Families 2020 program for a quasi-experimental, comparison group study, including both the extent to which implementation processes and participant outcomes supported a rigorous impact design. The evaluation used site-visits, focus groups, interviews, surveys, and administrative data. The sample size included 193 families.

What did the evaluation find?

As a grantee of the Social Innovation Fund, United Way of Central Indiana engaged an independent evaluator to evaluate the Great Families 2020 (GF2020) program. The evaluation found that:

- Overall, most issues with fidelity were start-up setbacks related to implementing a new service delivery model. The core components of the model – recruiting eligible families conducting and participating in family coaching, making warm referrals, and enrolling families in Centers for Working Families and early childhood education centers—were generally conducted with fidelity, though with some nuances.

- Meeting with family coaches was a crucial part of the service delivery process and important for identifying the extent to which a dosage of this service can be provided. Of 193 eligible families, 170 (93%) have met with GF2020 family coaches, with a 17-day average period between meetings and interactions with coaches.
- Initial trends indicate early improvements in key short-term indicators.

Notes on the evaluation

The evaluation included a feasibility study and an implementation study. The study will continue as an implementation study with substantial analysis on programmatic components and parent and child outcomes.

How is United Way of Central Indiana using the evaluation findings to improve?

The evaluation identified several different areas for program improvement for subgrantees. These included:

- Preparation – Developing implementation guides to ensure program fidelity across sites.
- Recruitment – The place-based enrollment strategy was too limiting initially, so boundaries were expanded to account for more families in need of services. Currently consideration is being made to completely remove all boundaries to support more families in need.
- Enrollment – Creating best practice documents to consistently identify persons “in need of services” to provide better clarity for program staff.

Evaluation At-a-Glance

Evaluation Designs: Feasibility and Implementation Study

Study Population: Families with at least one child (aged 0-5) in need of economic support or stabilization services.

Independent Evaluator: Indiana University Public Policy Institute and The Polis Center

This Evaluation’s Level of Evidence*: Preliminary

*SIF and AmeriCorps currently use different definitions of levels of evidence.

The content of this brief was drawn from the full evaluation report submitted to CNCS by the grantee/subgrantee. The section of the brief that discusses evaluation use includes contribution of the grantee/subgrantee. All original content from the report is attributable to its authors.

To access the full evaluation report and learn more about CNCS, please visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/research>.

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the U.S. The SIF invests in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.